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ABSTRACT

Presented in the guise of a hypothetical school board meeting, this information is intended to summarize the elements of competency based education (CBE) in a way that is easy to read and will increase understanding of its potential for improving education. It is aimed at state departments of education, school districts, and schools. Organized as if it were a presentation by four members of a study committee, the paper looks at CBE and four areas: student learning goals, curriculum, student assessment, and program management. Regarding CBE learning goals, three points are elaborated on: CBE programs are goal based; one important type of goal is the competency; and the community is involved in setting learning outcomes. Regarding CBE curriculum, four points are discussed: the curriculum is derived from student learning goals; instruction is personalized; time is flexible; and students attempt problems commonly encountered in adult life. The presentation on CBE assessment explains three points: assessment is goal based; programs often include a wide range of assessment options; and performance reports are used to provide assessment information. Three points relate to program management: it is goal based; planning is a major activity; and programs are adaptive. (Author/JM)

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A SCHOOL DISTRICT EXPLORES COMPETENCY BASED EDUCATION

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Ronald M. Smith and Robert E. Blum, authors

PREFACE

A School District Explores Competency Based Education is a description of competency based education (CBE) as it is envisioned by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) and is the beginning point for identifying philosophical and practical issues that surround the implementation of CBE programs. This paper should not be considered a full and comprehensive treatment of CBE. It does present a brief explanation of all of the key elements of CBE in a way that is easy to read. In the last section, implementation issues are listed as they may be stated by school board members. The ideas are presented through a hypothetical school board meeting, with a task force of teachers presenting results of their study of CBE. This approach was used to highlight the NWREL CBE Program's intent to develop the resources and capacity to influence implementation of CBE practices at the school district and school building levels.

The paper has two main purposes: (1) to increase understanding of CBE concepts and their potential for improving the quality of schooling and (2) to provide the starting point from which the Competency Based Education Program staff at NWREL will work to develop the resources and capacity to facilitate understanding and implementation of CBE programs and practices. This paper will be made available to state departments of education, school districts, schools and interested individuals directly from NWREL and through the major dissemination networks such as ERIC, state facilitators, state capacity builders and regional resource centers. The paper will become the referent to which all capacity and resource development efforts of the NWREL CBE staff will be connected.

Monographs on issues and research results, occasional papers describing selected examples of current CBE practices, abstracts of exemplary CBE programs and products, meetings and conferences bringing people together to share ideas about CBE concepts and even an implementor's handbook will be tied closely to the ideas and ideals presented in this document.

A School District Explores Competency Based Education is a working paper. As insights occur, strategies and techniques are proven and needs change, CBE concepts presented in this paper will be modified and updated. The NWREL CBE staff has the expectation of learning from interactive outreach efforts that are underway. We want to incorporate and use the ideas and beliefs of people throughout the Northwest region and the country so that the results of our efforts will be highly useful in school improvement efforts, particularly those being undertaken at the secondary school level.

We hope that the paper is interesting and helpful to you. Please contact us if we can be of assistance to you or if you have ideas and information to share with others through the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

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I. PROLOGUE

The last item of old business is resolved and the Board prepares to move to the first item of new business on the agenda, a progress report on a study that the Board had commissioned some six months earlier. Jack, the superintendent of schools, opens the discussion with a review of the background leading to tonight's presentation.

He reminds the Board members that the mission of the study committee had been to look at alternatives that would lead to program improvement, particularly at the secondary level. He also reminds them that several events with some common themes had prompted the study.

- First, the State Legislature had passed an accountability law that required implementation of several procedures. The timeline put the first phase of compliance originally two years down the road—now only a year away. This law had particular implications for high schools.

- Second, the faculty department heads of the district's three high schools had developed a joint report that suggested: (1) that the high school program, districtwide, was not adequately meeting the needs of some students, (2) that standards were slipping and (3) that the curriculum, in some respects, was no longer relevant.

- Third, a coalition of parent advisory groups in the district had expressed concerns about the whole K-12 program. Their concerns included a perception that students were promoted across grades with little regard for their readiness to advance and that standards were so low in the high schools that a diploma was meaningless.

- And lastly, a survey of local business people, conducted by the district's work-study coordinators, had revealed a

widespread dissatisfaction with the skill levels which students were bringing to the workplace.

Jack notes that these events or reports had led the Board to initiate the present study as part of the district's continuing school improvement process. The study committee, composed of a broad spectrum of school and community people, had reviewed several alternatives for improvement. Tonight members of the committee are going to report on an approach to instructional improvement called competency based education.

Jack introduces the four members of the study committee who will present the committee's findings and notes that the presentation will be divided into four areas, each area representing an important aspect of the district's educational program. These areas include:

- Student learning goals
- Curriculum
- Assessment
- Program management

After checking to make sure that all the materials that the presenter's need are ready to go, Jack turns the meeting over to the study committee.

II. STUDENT LEARNING GOALS

Garth, the study committee chairperson, greets the Board members, organizes his notes and begins his presentation on student learning goals. When designing his presentation, Garth decided to divide it into three parts or points, each relating some important dimension of goals as they apply to CBE programs.

Point 1: CBE programs are goal based.

In CBE programs, all the efforts of the program are focused on the attainment of clearly defined student learning goals. Teachers, administrators and parents all work together to help students achieve them. Since two board members are employed by electronics firms, Garth draws an analogy between the operations of such firms and the public schools. In a manufacturing concern, product design, engineering, manufacturing, marketing and sales are all focused on the attainment of the company's mission--profit making through the production and sales of manufactured goods. It is much the same in competency based education. Curriculum, instruction, assessment and management are all focused on the attainment of the school's mission--the education of students to become competent adults. The goals of the two concerns are different, but the essential logic--organization to achieve goals--is the same.

Garth points out that most of our activities as adults are goal-based, whether planning for a vacation, a home or retirement. To achieve these goals, we carry out a series of actions which we believe will produce a desired result. In complex, goal-directed organizations like an electronics firm or a school, where the activities of many people must be coordinated to achieve desired ends, goals need to be explicit and communicated to all participants. They need to be publicly displayed. In CBE programs, student learning goals help guide the actions of students, teachers, parents and administrators.

Point 2: Woven into each CBE program's goal structure is a particularly important type of statement called a competency.

In CBE programs, statements describing what students are to learn come in many forms and serve many dif-

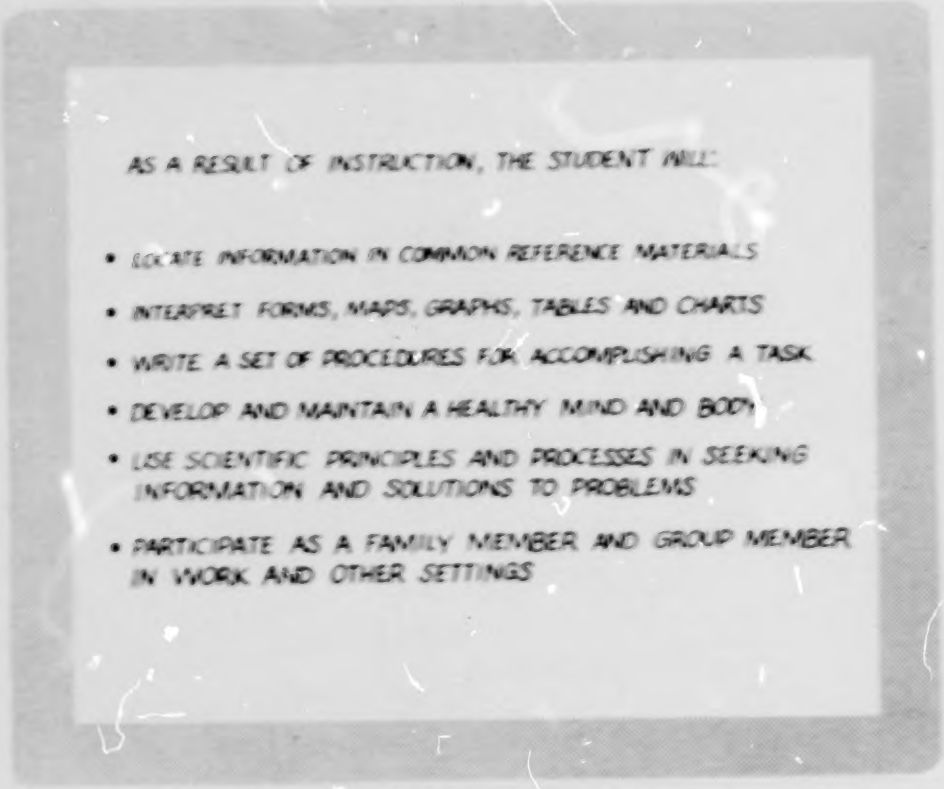
ferent purposes. Some are general, others specific. Some are designed to communicate the overall mission of schools to parents and community members, while others are designed to help teachers plan instruction. Still others help administrators manage programs effectively. An important task in CBE programs involves organizing all these statements in some systematic fashion. The idea is to coordinate and integrate programs through the use of well ordered sets of goals.

Perhaps the most important type of goal statement of all is called a competency. These goals require students to apply learned knowledge and skill to conditions typically encountered in adult life. Competencies reflect the real essence of competency based education. Garth elaborates on this point.

The purpose of CBE is to help students become competent—so that as adults they will get along well in life on a day-to-day basis. Competencies play an important role in achieving this purpose because their content is directly related to the requirements of adult life. In CBE programs the gap between school and adult life is narrowed as much as possible, so that a successful transition to adulthood at the end of formal schooling is more likely to occur. In general, lots of effort is focused on helping students apply their capabilities to real problems, the kinds they will encounter when they leave school.

CBE takes basic skills out of the textbook and into real life situations. For many students, this is a needed step in the development of basic language and math skills. The CBE approach complements and extends traditional basic skills instruction in a way that helps ensure that students acquire needed skills and that they apply them effectively.

At this point, Garth puts up an overhead transparency that displays some examples of competencies:

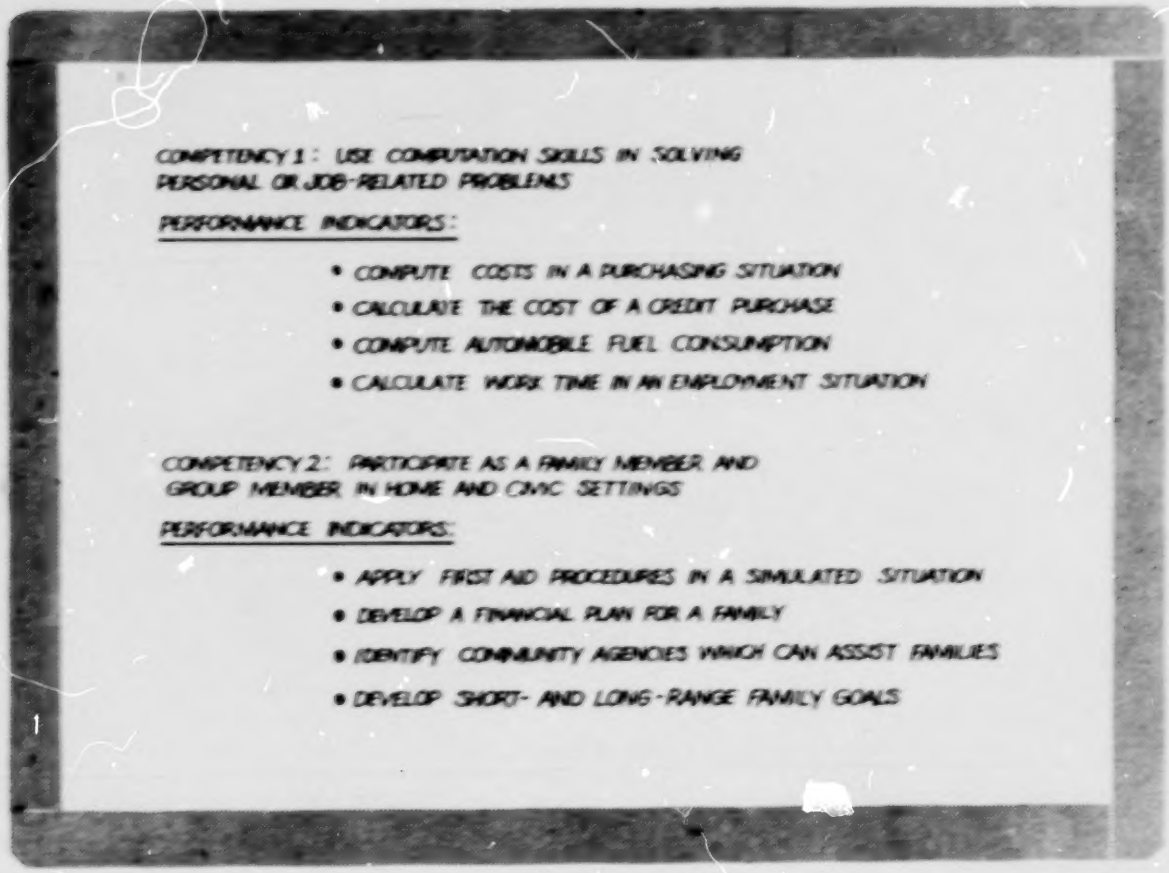

AS A RESULT OF INSTRUCTION, THE STUDENT WILL:
• LOCATE INFORMATION IN COMMON REFERENCE MATERIALS
• INTERPRET FORMS, MAPS, GRAPHS, TABLES AND CHARTS
• WRITE A SET OF PROCEDURES FOR ACCOMPLISHING A TASK
• DEVELOP AND MAINTAIN A HEALTHY MIND AND BODY
• USE SCIENTIFIC PRINCIPLES AND PROCESSES IN SEEKING INFORMATION AND SOLUTIONS TO PROBLEMS
• PARTICIPATE AS A FAMILY MEMBER AND GROUP MEMBER IN WORK AND OTHER SETTINGS

Education directed toward these and other similar competencies will make schooling more relevant and perhaps create a more motivating environment for many students.

Competencies are often regarded so highly by educators and community people alike that specific levels of achievement within many of the most important competencies are required for graduation, though students are expected and encouraged to go well beyond these minimum levels to attain a variety of higher level learnings. Meeting minimum requirements in essential areas is certainly important, but minimum essentials are only the foundation on which a broad spectrum of individual student achievements is built.

Competency statements are very useful for communicating the intent of education to students, parents and teachers, but are generally too global or abstract to teach or assess directly. For instructional purposes, competencies are usually broken down into a set of subgoals often called performance indicators. These indicators are used by teachers to develop instructional objectives, learning activities and assessments.

Now, for another transparency. This one shows two sample competencies with related performance indicators.


COMPETENCY 1: USE COMPUTATION SKILLS IN SOLVING PERSONAL OR JOB-RELATED PROBLEMS
PERFORMANCE INDICATORS:
• COMPUTE COSTS IN A PURCHASING SITUATION
• CALCULATE THE COST OF A CREDIT PURCHASE
• COMPUTE AUTOMOBILE FUEL CONSUMPTION
• CALCULATE WORK TIME IN AN EMPLOYMENT SITUATION
COMPETENCY 2: PARTICIPATE AS A FAMILY MEMBER AND GROUP MEMBER IN HOME AND CIVIC SETTINGS
PERFORMANCE INDICATORS:
• APPLY FIRST AID PROCEDURES IN A SIMULATED SITUATION
• DEVELOP A FINANCIAL PLAN FOR A FAMILY
• IDENTIFY COMMUNITY AGENCIES WHICH CAN ASSIST FAMILIES
• DEVELOP SHORT- AND LONG-RANGE FAMILY GOALS

Point 3: In CBE programs, the community is very much involved in setting student learning outcomes.

In some programs, community members are included as equal partners with professional educators, particularly in determining competencies and indicators. In other programs, community members have a more limited, though still important, role in validating competencies and helping establish priorities among them.

Through the goal-setting process, parents and other community members acquire more ownership in the operation of their schools. CBE programs emphasize participation from community members in many ways and particularly encourage parents and others to share the responsibility for the education of the community's youth. When community people understand the goals of education and value them, they are more likely to support the schools and be willing to contribute more enthusiastically to the vital mission of building competence among the young.

Summary

Garth quickly reviews his major points:

1. CBE programs are goal-based.

   - Student learning goals are used to guide or direct all other activities in the school.

   - Goals in CBE programs come in different forms to serve several different communication purposes.

2. Woven into each CBE program's goal structure is a particularly important type of statement called a competency.

   - Competencies are directly related to success in adult life and are written as applications of knowledge and skills.

3. In CBE programs, the community is very much involved in setting student learning outcomes.

   - Community members are asked to assume shared responsibility for the development of student competence.

Garth asks the Board members to hold any questions that they might have until the end of the complete presentation, then introduces the next presentor, Rita, who teaches social studies in one of the district's junior high schools.

III. CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

Rita, a 12-year veteran with the district, is highly regarded as a skilled teacher and has led several curriculum development efforts. She was a logical choice to present the findings in the area of curriculum and instruction. Rita places her first transparency on the screen and begins the presentation of the first of her four major points.

Point 1: In competency based education programs, the curriculum is derived from student learning goals and instruction is arranged to deliver learning experiences in effective ways.

Rita points out that many teachers in the district already use student learning goals in their classes. However, the links between goals, curriculum and instruction are not often drawn as strongly as they are in CBE programs. In such programs, no curriculum assumptions are made. Decisions about what will be taught are based on a careful review of educational goals rather than on the basis of subject matter categories or content biases.

Rita presents a personal example. She says that in preparing for her presentation, she came across several sets of student learning goals from schools that had CBE programs. As she looked through the goal statements, she tried

to identify those that she and her social studies colleagues would include in their subject area. Some goals were familiar and fit well with the content of her present courses:

- Describe the process for voting by absentee ballot
- Analyze a local political problem
- List three ways to register a consumer complaint

Other outcomes seemed not to fit so well, yet had a component of social studies imbedded in them. These goals seemed to overlap traditional subject matter boundaries:

- Compute the cost of living using local sources of information
- Write descriptive prose based on an oral history of an event or process

Still other goals represented areas that didn't seem to be taught currently in social studies or in any other subject area for that matter:

- Participate effectively in community service efforts
- Plan and implement an independent learning project

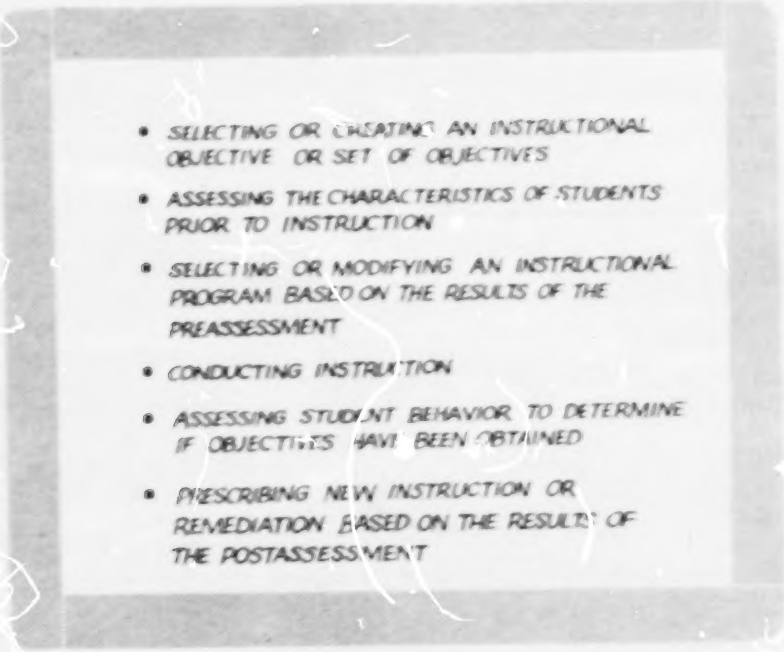
Rita realized that her training as a subject matter specialist had not prepared her to deal with outcomes outside the traditional social studies domain. But many of those "other" goals seemed important. It was clear that many outcomes would require careful analysis and the creation of new curricula. It also meant that colleagues from other departments may need to be involved in these activities.

CBE programs tend to be more interdisciplinary than traditional school programs. They require a more systematic approach to curriculum design and broader collaboration among the members of the teaching staff. Acquiring competence is a process that knows no subject matter boundaries.

Point 2: Instruction in CBE programs is personalized.

To the greatest extent possible, instruction is tailored to the needs and interests of each individual. Typically, students in schools using a CBE approach receive lots of assistance in planning their educational programs. In fact, some CBE schools formalize this process through the use of written individualized learning plans or maps. These plans identify short- and long-range educational goals and plot the sequence of learning experiences that will result in their attainment. Continuity of student learning is important in CBE programs. In fact, teachers in CBE programs work very hard to apply the concept of continuous progress in their classrooms.

Teachers also make use of a general teaching strategy often called systematic instruction or mastery learning. It is a process that includes:


• SELECTING OR CREATING AN INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVE OR SET OF OBJECTIVES
• ASSESSING THE CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENTS PRIOR TO INSTRUCTION
• SELECTING OR MODIFYING AN INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM BASED ON THE RESULTS OF THE PREASSESSMENT
• CONDUCTING INSTRUCTION
• ASSESSING STUDENT BEHAVIOR TO DETERMINE IF OBJECTIVES HAVE BEEN OBTAINED
• PRESCRIBING NEW INSTRUCTION OR REMEDIATION BASED ON THE RESULTS OF THE POSTASSESSMENT

Sometimes this instructional process is also called the diagnostic-prescriptive approach to teaching. No matter what the process is called, it is important to remember that essential characteristics include a constant reference of instruction to student needs and an emphasis on instructional cycles as the basis for teacher planning.

In addition, instruction in CBE programs includes the use of positive classroom management strategies. Teachers focus on good behavior, building on students' strengths rather than becoming preoccupied with their weaknesses. In CBE programs reinforcement is used appropriately and often; the emphasis is on success, and everyone works hard to build the supportive environment that is so important in developing positive student attitudes toward learning and ensuring high academic achievement.

Point 3: Time is used in a flexible way in CBE programs.

Time has a special meaning in CBE programs. What matters most is that students learn--that they attain goals. All other aspects of schooling, including time itself, are arranged to support student learning.

Rita points out that this flexibility has several important consequences. For instance, students are not expected to take courses whose content they have already mastered. Pretesting allows qualified students to move ahead, thus helping to eliminate redundancy. Frequently, CBE programs also count learning acquired through nonschool experiences toward fulfillment of academic requirements. What matters is that students become competent, not how well they conform

to a fixed schedule or sequence or in what setting their skills are acquired.

Conversely, students who don't attain a goal through primary instruction are not arbitrarily moved on because it's "time." Instead, CBE programs provide remediation and multiple opportunities to learn so that the continuity of development remains unbroken.

Teachers in CBE programs also try to arrange maximum time on task for their students. This aspect of CBE programs is particularly important because, as Rita discovered, there is increasing evidence that time on task and student achievement are closely related. The high level of organization attainable through the use of systematic instructional techniques really supports this goal. Through improved organization teachers are better able to provide the relatively intense instructional environment needed to foster high student achievement.

Point 4: Learning activities in CBE programs require application of knowledge and skills to those kinds of problems commonly encountered in adult life.

To help students attain life-related goals, many CBE schools have found it necessary to expand their range of learning activities, learning sites and teaching strategies. For instance, places out in the community--bakeries, television repair shops, hospitals, theaters--all can be sites where students can acquire valuable skills and knowledge. Such community learning sites, often staffed by community members working closely with school people, have shown great promise.

In school, teachers often try to make their instructional activities as realistic as possible through the use of techniques like simulation and role playing. The point is to facilitate transfer of school learning to the adult world.

Summary

Rita now reviews her points for the Board members:

1. In CBE programs the curriculum is derived from student learning goals and instruction is arranged to deliver learning experiences in effective ways.

   - Interdisciplinary team effort in curriculum planning and implementation is an important feature.

2. Instruction in CBE programs is personalized.

   - Each student has a long- and short-range learning plan.
   - A continuous progress, mastery approach to learning is emphasized.
   - Teachers use a systematic/diagnostic-prescriptive instructional model.
   - Classrooms are managed using a positive approach.

3. Time is used in a flexible way in CBE programs.

   - Competence attained through avenues other than formal schooling is often recognized.
   - Students have more than one opportunity to achieve a learning goal.

4. Learning activities in CBE programs require application of knowledge and skills to those kinds of problems commonly encountered in adult life.

   - The community is used more as a site for learning experiences.

Rita gathers together her notes and turns over the next part of the presentation to Rico, a high school art teacher, who'll discuss the nature of assessment in CBE programs.

IV. ASSESSMENT

After making a few minor adjustments on the overhead projector, Rico begins. He has several specific points to make, but before presenting the first of these, he makes an introductory comment about assessment. Rico notes that while CBE is often linked with paper and pencil graduation tests, this linkage is often overemphasized. In reality, assessment strategies in CBE programs are often very flexible and cover a wide range of student learning goals across many levels of performance.

With this orienting statement made, Rico moves to his first point.

Point 1: Assessment in CBE programs is goal based like all other activities in the program.

The purpose of assessment is to determine how well students are doing in terms of the goals which are set for them or which they choose for themselves. Assessment is designed to help people--teachers, students, parents, administrators--make good educational decisions. So in CBE programs, good information about student performance is needed.

Point 2: CBE programs often include a wide range of assessment options.

Rico admits that until he started looking into it, he had always equated CBE with minimum competency tests composed of multiple choice items. Though multiple choice tests are used in CBE programs, as in most educational programs, they are only one of the many tactics that are typically employed.

Rico re-emphasizes the point that CBE programs focus on student learning goals that require applications of skill and knowledge in adult life

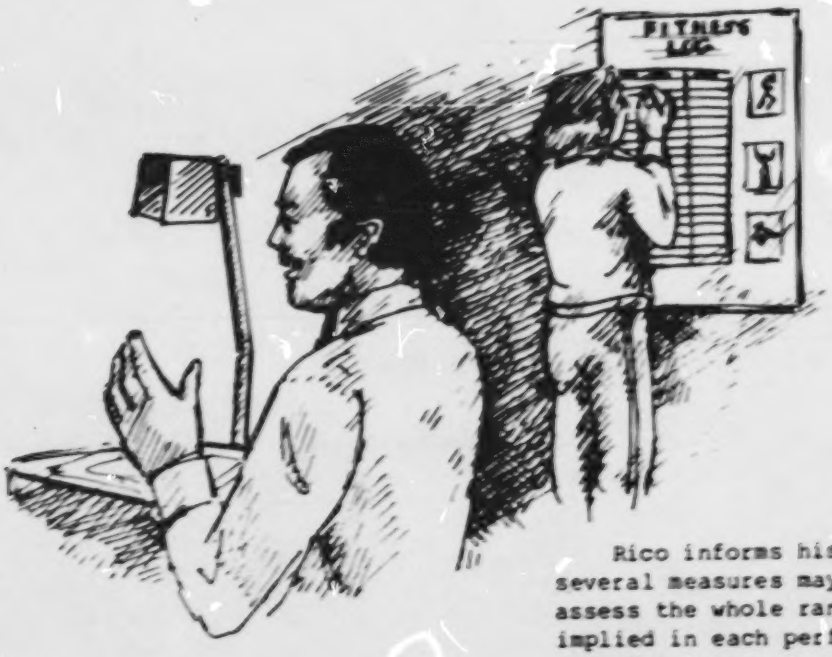
settings. These kinds of outcomes are often assessed through the use of applied performance tests rather than with paper and pencil exams. Applied performance tests require students to perform tasks in simulated or real life settings. For instance, a student's ability to read a map might be assessed by having the student use a map to guide the driver of a car to a specified location. Or a student's ability to use comparison shopping techniques might be assessed by having the student select the best value from among several similar items in a department store.

Rico notes that many CBE programs use parents, other community people or even students as assessors or certifiers, especially when application goals are being assessed.

Since assessment is related to goals, CBE programs rely heavily on criterion-referenced measurement strategies. In most cases it is more important to know how a student is doing in relationship to an educational goal than it is to know how the student is doing in relationship with peers. Special emphasis in CBE is focused on selecting or developing reliable, valid criterion-referenced measures of student achievement.

At this point, Rico shows a transparency illustrating the connections between goals and assessment methods. The transparency displays the following examples:

SAMPLE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	SAMPLE ASSESSMENT METHODS
• INTERPRET THE CONTENT OF SPEECHES, DISCUSSIONS, FILMS AND TELEVISION SHOWS	• AFTER VIEWING A VIDEO TAPE OF A POLICY SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, THE STUDENT ANSWERS SHORT ANSWER ESSAY QUESTIONS; THE QUESTIONS ASK THE STUDENT TO STATE ALL THE MAIN IDEAS IN THE SPEECH IN HIS/HER OWN WORDS AND RELATE THOSE IDEAS TO CONTEMPORARY EVENTS OR CONDITIONS; ANSWERS ARE REVIEWED FOR ACCURACY, COMPLETENESS AND ADHERENCE TO FORMAT REQUIREMENTS
• WRITE LETTERS TO MEET EVERYDAY NEEDS	• GIVEN A NEWSPAPER AD OFFERING A PRODUCT FOR SALE, THE STUDENT WRITES A LETTER ORDERING THE PRODUCT; THE COMPLETED LETTER IS REVIEWED FOR CLARITY OF FORM, PUNCTUATION AND GRAMMATICAL CORRECTNESS
• DEVELOP AND USE PERSONAL PLANS FOR DIET, DENTAL CARE, FITNESS AND RECREATION	• FOLLOWING DEVELOPMENT OF A PERSONAL PHYSICAL FITNESS PROGRAM, THE STUDENT PARTICIPATES IN THE ACTIVITIES SPECIFIED IN THE PLAN FOR THREE MONTHS; AT REGULAR INTERVALS WEIGHT AND VARIOUS MEASURES OF FITNESS ARE OBTAINED AND REVIEWED FOR CONFORMANCE TO DEVELOPMENT GOALS
• USE ART MEDIA TO CREATE ITEMS	• AFTER DEVELOPING A PLAN, THE STUDENT PRODUCES A USEFUL OR DECORATIVE HOUSEHOLD ITEM USING CLAY OR WOOD AS THE MEDIUM; THE COMPLETED ITEM IS REVIEWED USING TEN RATING SCALES FOR VARIOUS DIMENSIONS OF UTILITY AND ARTISTIC MERIT



Rico informs his audience that several measures may be needed to assess the whole range of behaviors implied in each performance indicator and that among any set of measures several may be acceptable as equivalent forms of achievement or attainment.

Point 3: Performance reports based on goals are often used to provide information to students, parents and teachers about student progress.

In many CBE programs student attainment of important (essential) goals is certified. This means that student performance is evaluated against performance standards and, in cases where student performance meets or exceeds minimum levels, the performance becomes acceptable evidence of competence--the performance is certified and the certification is made known publicly. Having information about student performance against standards is a big help to teachers, parents and administrators in helping individuals plan programs to meet their goals. Some schools even use this certification process as the basis for granting or withholding high school diplomas.

Summary

Rico puts up the last transparency and reviews the points that he's made.

1. Assessment in CBE programs is goal-based like all other activities in the program.

2. CBE programs often include a wide range of assessment options.

   - A criterion-referenced measurement approach predominates.
   - There is a preference for direct measures such as applied performance tests.
   - Parents and other community people participate in the assessment/certification process.

3. Performance reports based on goals are often used to provide information to students, parents and teachers about student progress.

   - Information about group performance is made public to the community at large.
   - Assessment results are used to plan programs for individual students.
   - Graduation requirements are often directly linked to assessment results.

Now Anne, an assistant principal for curriculum in one of the high schools, takes the lead to present the program management implications of CBE.

V. PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

Anne begins her presentation by noting that CBE is a comprehensive, integrated approach to school improvement which, in one way or another, involves all components of the school program: instruction, administration and support services. Because of this broad scope, administrator's have a key role in the successful implementation and operation of CBE programs.

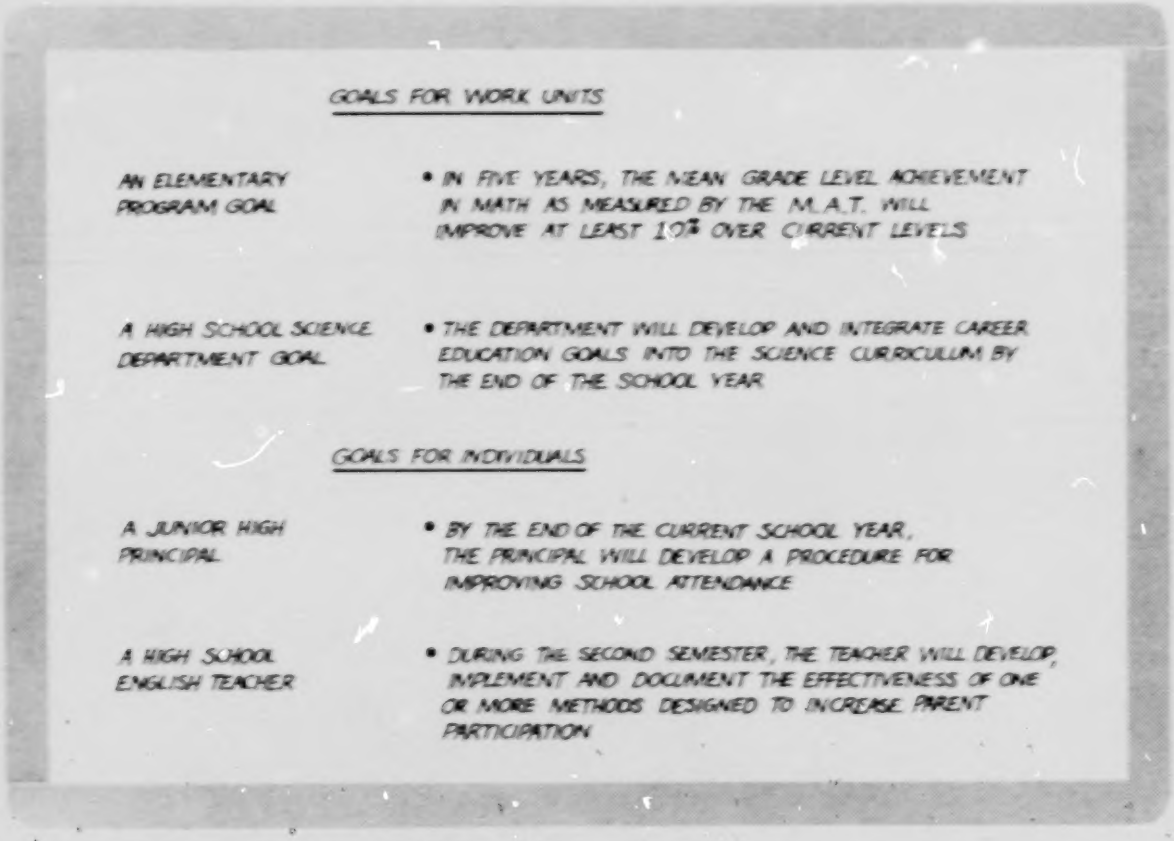
Anne states that three major points about program management need to be made.

Point 1: Program management is goal based.

Program management activities, like teaching activities, are focused on achieving clearly defined goals. These management goals are derived from an analysis of student learning goals and the conditions that are required to achieve them. Such goals help improve the stability of schools and, at the same time, make them more responsive to the need for change. They can help school boards and district administrators improve programs and manage unexpected problems with a high degree of control and with minimum disruption of ongoing activities. Management goals do not include statements of student behavior. Instead, they describe the actions of organizational work units and of the indi-

viduals who comprise them. They usually are set in specific periods of time, such as quarters, semesters or years.

Anne shows an example:


GOALS FOR WORK UNITS
AN ELEMENTARY PROGRAM GOAL
• IN FIVE YEARS, THE MEAN GRADE LEVEL ACHIEVEMENT IN MATH AS MEASURED BY THE M.A.T. WILL IMPROVE AT LEAST 10% OVER CURRENT LEVELS
A HIGH SCHOOL SCIENCE DEPARTMENT GOAL
• THE DEPARTMENT WILL DEVELOP AND INTEGRATE CAREER EDUCATION GOALS INTO THE SCIENCE CURRICULUM BY THE END OF THE SCHOOL YEAR
GOALS FOR INDIVIDUALS
A JUNIOR HIGH PRINCIPAL
• BY THE END OF THE CURRENT SCHOOL YEAR, THE PRINCIPAL WILL DEVELOP A PROCEDURE FOR IMPROVING SCHOOL ATTENDANCE
A HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH TEACHER
• DURING THE SECOND SEMESTER, THE TEACHER WILL DEVELOP, IMPLEMENT AND DOCUMENT THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ONE OR MORE METHODS DESIGNED TO INCREASE PARENT PARTICIPATION

Anne emphasizes that management goals are set in a context of routine tasks and areas of responsibility, as already well defined in many schools. The goals help people target their efforts on priority problems and help groups of people in work units work as a team to achieve program improvements.

Point 2: In CBE programs, planning is a major management activity.

Administrators in CBE programs organize their personal activities to accomplish the management goals that fall within their areas of responsibility. All management goals within a program and the proposed strategies for achieving them are often imbedded in a comprehensive program plan that integrates short-, intermediate- and long-range management efforts.

Planning from a CBE perspective needs to involve people both from within the school organization itself and from the larger community that supports the school. Teamwork and collaboration are common characteristics of the program planning process. A systematic management plan helps people work together more effectively and helps individuals stay on target in carrying out their tasks.

Point 3: CBE programs are adaptive.

Through the inclusion of systematic review and revision procedures, which administrators organize and manage, CBE programs improve as time goes by. They are changed to operate more effectively or efficiently. Continuous program improvement is a major theme for CBE managers who look for systematic ways to ensure it.

To support the improvement process, CBE programs often rely on a well-defined management information system. The system draws important information about student performance from the classroom level and systematically summarizes and supplements this information as it flows through the school organization to a variety of key decision makers.

Management information is ultimately fed into an evaluation system that is keyed to local goals. Every effort is made to make decisions based on high quality, reliable information which has been collected specifically to provide evidence concerning progress within the program toward goals. The end result of the evaluation process is a set of recommendations for change which will lead to program improvement when implemented.

In a sense, implementation of a CBE program is never complete. CBE is an approach to education rather than a fixed set of procedures.

Summary

Now Anne reviews her points for the Board members.

1. Program management is goal based.
2. In CBE programs, planning to achieve goals is a major management activity.
3. CBE programs are adaptive.
   - Systematic review and revision procedures are built into CBE programs.
   - A management information system is developed to produce and disseminate the high quality information about student progress that's needed for good decisions.

When Anne finishes, Garth takes the floor again to wrap up the presentation.

VI. SUMMARY

Garth uses the last few minutes of time allotted to the presentation to summarize all the major characteristics of competency based education programs:

Student Learning Goals

- Goals are used to guide or direct all program activities--CBE programs are goal based.
- Goals come in several different forms to serve several different communication purposes.
- The most important type of goal is a competency which requires students to apply skills and knowledge to common adult life problems and conditions.
- The community is involved in setting and revising student learning goals.

Curriculum and Instruction

- The curriculum is derived from student learning goals and instruction is arranged to deliver learning experiences in effective ways.
- An interdisciplinary team effort in curriculum planning and implementation is an important program feature.
- Instruction is personalized.
  - Individualized learning plans, including both short and long range goals are used.
  - Continuous progress, mastery learning is emphasized.
  - A systematic/diagnostic prescriptive instructional model is used.
  - Positive classroom management strategies are employed.
- Time is used in a flexible way.
  - Students have more than one opportunity to achieve a learning goal.
  - Competence attained through avenues other than formal schooling is recognized.
- The curriculum features learning activities that require students to apply classroom learning to adult life problems.

Assessment

- Assessment is related directly to student learning goals.
- A criterion-referenced measurement approach is emphasized.
- Direct measures such as applied performance tests are preferred, especially when certification is the purpose of the assessment activity.
- Parents and other community people often are involved in the assessment/certification process.
- Detailed performance reports are used to provide information about student progress and are used to help students plan their programs.
- Information about group performance is made available to the community at large.
- Graduation requirements often are directly linked to assessment results.

Program Management

- Program administration is based on management goals which relate directly to student learning goals.
- Planning based on educational goals is a major management activity.
- Programs are adaptive.
  - — Systematic review and revision procedures are built in.
  - — A management information system is used to develop and spread high quality information to a variety of decision makers.

After finishing the summary, Garth concludes by noting that the study committee feels that competency based education may be a very promising approach to the district's school improvement goals, especially at the secondary level. In particular Garth says that CBE may likely:

- Increase the relevance of the curriculum
- Improve the quality of instruction
- Give a more substantial base for promotion and graduation
- Provide teachers, parents and administrators with better information needed for important decisions
- Make it easier for administrators to manage programs effectively

and, perhaps most important of all,

- Help ensure that all students who graduate from the high school in the district will be well prepared to succeed in adult life.

Garth thanks the Board members for their attention and invites questions from them.

VII. EPILOGUE

Following the presentation, the Board has many tough, important questions.

- CBE sounds like it involves a pretty comprehensive change. How can we get all these things done? Where do we start?
- How many of the things you attributed to CBE have to be in operation before our programs will work? All or some?
- How much will it cost? Will it be more expensive than what we are doing now?
- How long will it take to get a CBE program going?
- What implications does CBE have for staffing patterns?
- How do you go about getting the community more involved in school programs?
- What's going to happen to kids who don't meet standards along the way?
- Do teachers and administrators in our district have all the skills they need to make a CBE program work?
- Where do the "basics" of education fit into the CBE approach?

Garth and the committee had answers for some of these questions; for some they did not. However, it was clear that the Board's interest had been stimulated and that they wanted to know more about CBE. Not surprisingly, the Board approved continued study of the CBE approach, as they had with another improvement alternative. The committee was directed to return in two months with specific recommendations for school improvement.

Garth and his colleagues know that many steps lie ahead. But they are encouraged that school improvement will become a reality.